

Safety Sends #11

Our Army is at war, and you can feel the ongoing efforts to protect our combat capability. However, we are not there yet. In Fallujah and Mosul, off a balcony in Texas, in a car in Louisiana, on a motorcycle in Missouri, and elsewhere, accidents continue to drain our combat power. Just look at the numbers since the end of October: 12 Class A mishaps and 11 fatalities. Four Soldiers died in POVs, two in Army combat vehicles, two in Army motor vehicles, and three due to personal injuries. **In just over three weeks, we have lost another squad.**

Here's a thumbnail sketch of reported Class A accidents from 24 October to 16 November 2004. The details are sketchy, but I want to share what we know.

- 16 November, Iraq: An armored M998 HMMWV rolled off a 20-foot embankment into a ditch while on patrol. One Soldier was killed, and eight others were injured.
- 15 November, Iraq: Soldier (gunner) was ejected when a 5-ton gun truck rear-ended a contractor's truck. The Soldier died from severe head trauma.
- 15 November, Georgia: Soldier was traveling home from work on a motorcycle when he was involved in an accident with a POV. He was thrown from the bike and suffered fatal injuries.
- 13 November, Iraq: An M1117 was stopped at an intersection when a POV struck it. The M1117 overturned several times. The gunner suffered fatal injuries.
- 12 November, Missouri: Soldier was thrown from his motorcycle while jumping a sand berm. The bike landed on the Soldier's head, causing fatal injuries.
- 12 November, Iraq: An M1A2 tank overturned en route to refueling operations. A Soldier in the turret was killed.
- 6 November, Louisiana: Soldier was driving his POV when the vehicle ran off the roadway, hit a culvert, and overturned. The Soldier died upon arrival at the local hospital.
- 6 November, Texas: Intoxicated Soldier was on a balcony, lunged toward the railing to spit, lost his balance, and fell two floors. The Soldier died from the impact.
- 2 November, North Carolina: Soldier lost control of his POV, causing the vehicle to run off the roadway and overturn. The Soldier suffered fatal injuries.
- 28 October, North Carolina: One UH-60 went inadvertent instrument meteorological conditions while flying a night vision goggle training mission as a flight of two. The aircraft made a rapid descent to avoid the other aircraft and crashed into the trees. Four Soldiers were injured.
- 24 October, North Carolina: Soldier died while piloting a private plane that crashed in the mountains.
- 24 October, Kuwait: Soldier collapsed while participating in a 10-mile event carrying a 30-pound rucksack. The Soldier was evacuated to the local hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Here is the bottom line: We continue to be well above the glide slope for meeting the Secretary of Defense's 50-percent accident reduction goal. More importantly, we are losing our combat power.

In record time, Army Safety is transforming and changing its processes to take full advantage of composite risk management—a holistic look at ALL risks: tactical and accidental, deployed and garrison, on and off duty, 24/7. This new mindset is a cultural change that ensures risk management becomes part of every first-line supervisor's daily duty. It should be applied to *every* activity. Composite risk management is not about being risk averse...it is about being smart and managing risks wherever and whenever they present themselves.

Coach 'em hard on composite risk management whether you are under an oak tree, in a tent, or in the barracks. The Thanksgiving holiday is just around the corner. For those of you not deployed, keep in mind that the Sunday after Thanksgiving is historically the most heavily traveled day of the year. Thanks to each of you for allowing me to share frank thoughts through "Safety Sends." The audience continues to grow because of your interest and efforts.

Joe Smith, BG